REMARKS

Applicants have carefully reviewed and considered the Examiner's Office Action dated May 16, 2005. Reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the comments set forth below.

By this Amendment, claims 1, 5, 11, 15-16 and 17 are amended; and claims 2, 6, 13, and 18 are canceled. Accordingly, claims 1, 3-5, 7-12, 14-17 and 19-20 are pending in the present application.

Claims 1,3-5, 7-15 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by UK Patent Application No. 2,145,918 to Arthur et al. (hereinafter referred to as "Arthur") as explained in paragraph 2 of the Action. Claims 2, 6, 16 and 18-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Arthur for the reasons set forth in paragraph 4 of the Action. It is believed that the forgoing amendments render the rejections moot; however, to the extent the rejections may apply, these rejections are respectfully traversed.

As shown in Figure 4 of an exemplary embodiment of the invention, the mostly non-separated fiber material and/or fiber/fiber group mixture 49 is moved via an accumulation chute 44 and feed rollers 46 to separating drums 26. The fibers 49 are of a finite length as they are fed into the separating drums (devices). Paragraphs 31 and 34 of the originally-filed application provide support for the step of feeding finite fibers to the separating device. The finite fibers are then separated into individual fibers by the separating screen 21 and separating drum of each separating device in a preferred embodiment. Then, the separated, individualized fibers are fed to a conveyor moving in a conveying direction such that the separated fibers form the nonwoven where a rotational

axis of the at least one separating device is oriented essentially parallel to the conveying direction of the conveyor.

In contrast to the claimed invention, Arthur discloses conveying a substantially continuous stream of filament or a relatively long filament and means for breaking the continuous or relatively long filament into shorter filaments. In particular, Arthur describes crimped tow 10 being fed downwards between rollers 11 and 12 and then rollers 13 and 14 before being delivered to a roller 16 with pins 15 that breaks the filter tow into filaments of varying length. The broken filaments of Arthur are then deposited on a carrier stream moving on line 20. This is completely different from the claimed invention.

With respect to claims 1 and 5, Arthur, at least, fails to disclose the steps of 1) introducing fibers with a finite length to at least one separating device; and 2)feeding the fibers to a conveyor moving in a conveying direction such that the separated fibers form the nonwoven wherein a rotational axis of the at least one separating device is oriented essentially parallel to the conveying direction of the conveyor. Nowhere does Arthur disclose, let alone teach or suggest, using the pin roller to separate fibers into individual fibers, as set forth in claim 1, nor does Arthur disclose more than one device for breaking the filament into smaller lengths (claim 5). In addition, Arthur does not disclose the step of separating fibers of the two types of filter material in separate separating devices, nor does Arthur disclose the step of combining the separated fibers in claim 5. Accordingly, Arthur cannot anticipate claims 1, 3-5, and 7-10. Nor, can Arthur render the claims obvious because Arthur does not separate finite fibers into fibers as Arthur teaches one to break a continuous or relatively long filament into smaller lengths.

With respect to claims 11 and 17, Arthur does not disclose a machine or an arrangement with 1) at least one separating device for separating fibers of at least one type of filter material, wherein the fibers are introduced with a finite length into the at least one separating device; 2) the at least one separating device includes a rotating separating element; and 3) a conveyor for receiving the separated fibers from the at least one separating device where in the rotating separating element has a rotational axis essentially oriented parallel to the conveying direction of the conveyor. The Action takes Official Notice that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to realign conveyor 88 of Arthur or to use another conveyor in a parallel direction. However, the Action does not address the fundamental difference between Arthur and the claimed invention. Arthur does not feed fibers of a finite length into the pin roller, but a continuous or relatively long filament. Thus, Arthur does not disclose a device for feeding fibers of a finite length into a separating device. Further, Arthur does not separate the fibers in the pin roller but breaks them into smaller filaments. This is not the separation claimed by Applicants. Consequently, Arthur does not teach or suggest the claimed invention. Accordingly, Arthur does not render claims 11-12, 14-17, and 19-20 obvious.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that independent claims 1, 5, 11 and 17 and their respective dependent claims 3-4; 6-10; 12 and 14-16; and 19-20 are allowable over the prior art of record. Reconsideration of the application and an issuance of a Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

If the Examiner is of the opinion that the prosecution of the application would be advanced by a personal interview, the Examiner is invited to telephone undersigned counsel to arrange for such an interview.

Respectfully submitted,

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